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4/16/01 PATENT APPLICATION

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of	:	Robin HARKER
Serial no.	:	09/711,983
Filed	:	November 14, 2000
For	:	COMPUTER SYSTEMS
Docket	:	COLGRA P21AUS

The Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
Washington, D.C. 20231

SUBMISSION OF CERTIFIED COPY

Dear Sir:

A claim for priority is hereby made under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. § 119 for the above-identified United States Patent Application based upon Great Britain Patent Application No. 9926858.3 filed November 15, 1999. A certified copy of said Great Britain application is enclosed herewith.

In the event that there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge the same or credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account (Account No. 04-0213).

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Bujold, Reg. No. 32,018
Customer No. 020210
Davis & Bujold, P.L.L.C.
Fourth Floor
500 North Commercial Street
Manchester NH 03101-1151
Telephone 603-624-9220
Facsimile 603-624-9229
E-mail: patent@davisandbujold.com

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

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By:_____
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15NOV99 E491717-1 D02697
P01/7700 0.00-9926858.3

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The Patent Office
Cardiff Road
Newport
Gwent NP9 1RH

1. Your reference PA/GAF99

15 NOV 1999

2. Patent application number *(The Patent Office will fill in this part)* 9926858.3

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant *(underline all surnames)*

WORKSTATIONS (UK) LIMITED
UNITS 3 & 4, WOODSIDE WALK,
WOODSIDE ROAD,
AMERSHAM,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HP6 6AA

Patents ADP number *(if you know it)*

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

ENGLAND

7789420 01

4. Title of the invention

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

5. Name of your agent *(if you have one)*

GRAHAM F COLES

"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent *(including the postcode)*

GRAHAM COLES & CO
24 SEELEYS ROAD
BEACONSFIELD
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
HP9 1SZ

Patents ADP number *(if you know it)*

4361556001

6. If you are declaring priority from one or more earlier patent applications, give the country and the date of filing of the or of each of these earlier applications and *(if you know it)* the or each application number

Country	Priority application number *(if you know it)*	Date of filing *(day / month / year)*

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application	Date of filing *(day / month / year)*

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? *(Answer 'Yes' if:*

a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
b) there is an inventor who is not named as an applicant, or
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Continuation sheets of this form	
Description	5
Claim(s)	
Abstract	
Drawing(s)	2 + 4

10. If you are also filing any of the following, state how many against each item.

Priority documents	
Translations of priority documents	
Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent *(Patents Form 7/77)*	
Request for preliminary examination and search *(Patents Form 9/77)*	
Request for substantive examination *(Patents Form 10/77)*	
Any other documents *(please specify)*	

11. I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature [signature] Date 13/11/99

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

GRAHAM F COLES ☎ 01494 677181

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Computer Systems

This invention relates to computer systems, and is concerned especially with computer systems of the kind that involve the interconnection or clustering of a multiplicity of processors for parallel operation.

It is known to form a computing system of the above-specified kind by interconnecting the processing units of a multiplicity of personal computers (PCs) and operating them in parallel with one another; such systems are sometimes referred to as 'Beowulf clusters'. The central processing units (CPUs) of PCs provide significant computing power at relatively-low cost, and advantage has been taken of this to form systems of the above-specified kind having very high computing power comparable with that of a specially-designed supercomputer, at a fraction of the supercomputer-cost. In such systems a multiplicity of PC-CPUs are interconnected and operated in parallel with one another as separate nodes of a local area network. These systems using clustered CPUs require the development of special software to enable parallel operation, and are generally slower than their supercomputer counterparts, but have significant advantage economically.

The CPUs of PCs are not designed to have the extended reliability to be expected of a supercomputer, so computing systems of the known form involving clustered CPUs are, in comparison, susceptible to faults. A fault occurring in an individual CPU will disrupt processing of the current application, and although the application can in general be re-started without replacement of the faulty unit, the disruption and loss of computing time involved is undesirable.

It is one of the objects of the present invention to provided a computer system of the said above-specified kind, which whilst having the potential for cost advantage of the known clustered PC-CPU systems, is less susceptible to fault disruption.

According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer system of the said above-specified kind wherein power supply to each processor is from a common power-supply means having fault-tolerating redundancy.

The computer system of the present invention may, especially for cost-advantage, utilise processors that are a form such as used in the context of PC computers. However, in accordance with the present invention, rather than powering each processor from its own power-supply unit as in the case of the known form of computer system referred to above utilising PC-CPUs, they are powered from common power-supply means. The power-supply units of PC-CPUs especially, are not designed to have long fault-free operation so the likelihood of a fault arising in any of a multiplicity of PC-CPUs operating in parallel, can be significantly high. The individual power-supply units might be replaced by units with a higher standard of reliability, but it is generally more economical to provide a common power-supply means and invest this with an even higher standard of reliability and, moreover, to include fault-tolerating redundancy within it.

The processors of the computer system according to the invention may be carried by individual printed-circuit boards, for example PC motherboards, that are mounted together side-by-side within a rack-mounting. The rack-mounting may be contained within a cabinet together with the power-supply means.

The power-supply means may involve one or more power-supply units each of which comprises a plurality of power-supply modules which operate in parallel with one another in supplying power to the processors. The modules may each include diode or other circuitry that is responsive to the occurrence of a fault within the module (eg reduction in its voltage output in relation to that of the other module) to isolate that module effectively from the processors. Where more than one power-supply unit is involved, they may act in parallel with one another to power all the processors together.

A computer system in accordance with the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a front elevation of the computer system according to the invention, with the front panel of the cabinet housing the system removed;

Figure 2 is a sectional plan of the computer system of Figure 1 showing only two of its five processing modules with one fully inserted and the other only partialy inserted;

Figure 3 is a sectional side elevation of the computer system of Figure 1; and

Figure 4 is a schematic representation of the power distribution circuitry of the computer system of Figure 1.

Referring to Figures 1 to 3, the computer system of the invention is housed within a standard computer cabinet 1 which contains racking (not shown in detail) for supporting five processor modules 2 side-by-side within the cabinet 1. Each processor module 2 includes an L-

shape plate 3 by which it is supported in the cabinet 1, the plate 3 being held upright by engagement of its top and bottom edges 4 and 5 within grooved tracks 6 and 7, respectively, of the racking, so that the module 2 can be readily slid in and out of the cabinet 1 on the tracks 6 and 7. Handles 8 are provided at the front of each module 2 to assist with insertion and withdrawal, and power connection to the module 2 is established when the module 2 is fully inserted via a two-part plug-and-socket connector 9 (shown as a single block) at the rear of the projecting base-part 10 of the L-shape plate 3.

Each plate 3 carries a PC-CPU motherboard 11 that is mounted in spaced face-to-face relationship with it immediately behind a front-panel 12 of the module 2. This enables data connections to be readily made with its processor 13 and a plug-in network card 14 (see Figure 3) and other circuitry (not shown) of the motherboard 11, via connectors 15 on the front-panel 12. The motherboard 11 is interconnected by wiring (not shown) for data interchange with a hard-disk unit 16 mounted on the projecting base-part 10 of the plate 3, and is powered along with the unit 16 by connections (not shown) from the connector 9.

Referring also now to Figure 4, power is supplied to all five processor modules 2 in parallel via a wiring loom 17 which interconnects their connectors 9 with two power-supply units 18. The units 18, which are mounted at the back of the cabinet 1 to lie above the base-parts 10 of the five plates 3, each comprise two, redundant power-supply modules 19. The two modules 19 supply power in parallel with one another, and each includes diode circuitry 20 (indicated in Figure 4 in the case of one module 19 only). The circuitry 20 is operative to isolate the respective module 19 from its paired module 19 and the loom 17 generally, in the event that a fault

occurs by which the voltage output of the module 19 falls so that current would otherwise flow to it rather than from it.

The two units 18 operate in parallel with one another in supplying power to the five processor modules 2, so that the operation in parallel of the four power-supply modules 19 is with a significant degree of redundancy for power-supply fault-survival.

The five processor modules 2 are interconnected via the connectors 15 and network cards 14 by data-cabling (not shown) to operate in parallel with one another as individual nodes of a local-area network and provide a high-powered computing capability. The PC motherboards 11 used, have a high degree of reliability, and that same degree of reliability is afforded to the computer system as a whole by the use of the highly-reliable form of powering adopted.

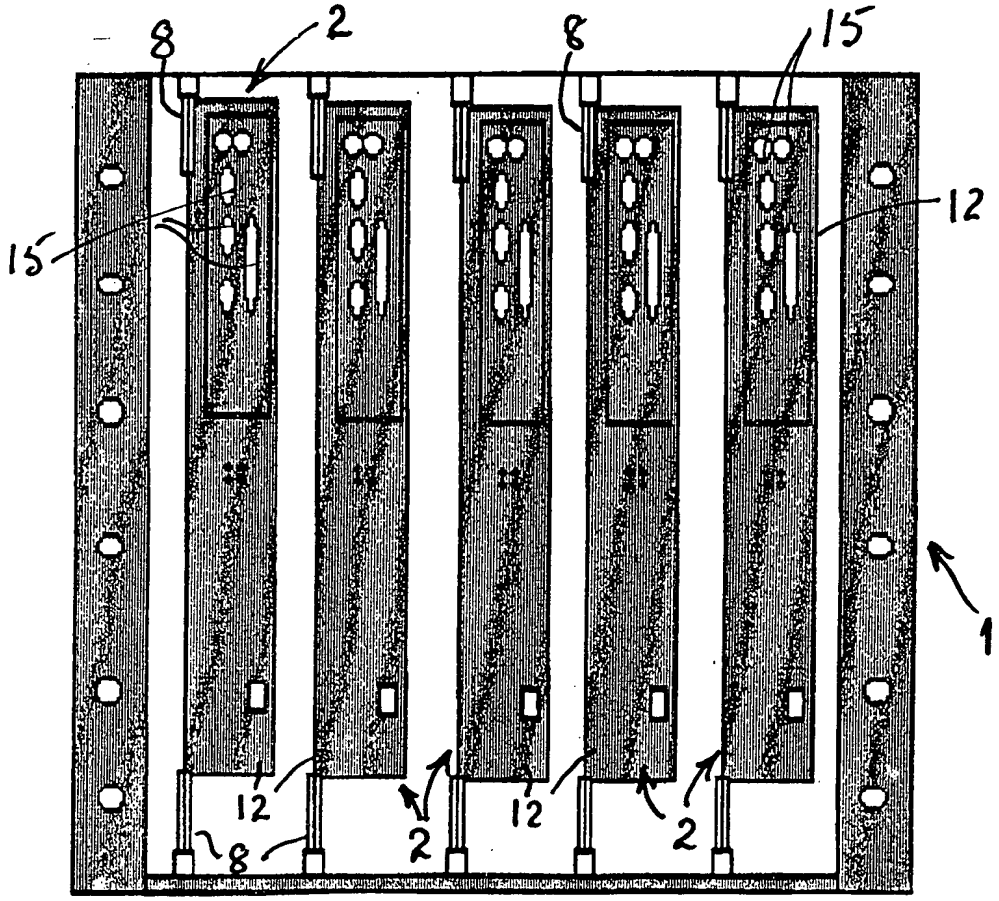

Fig. 1

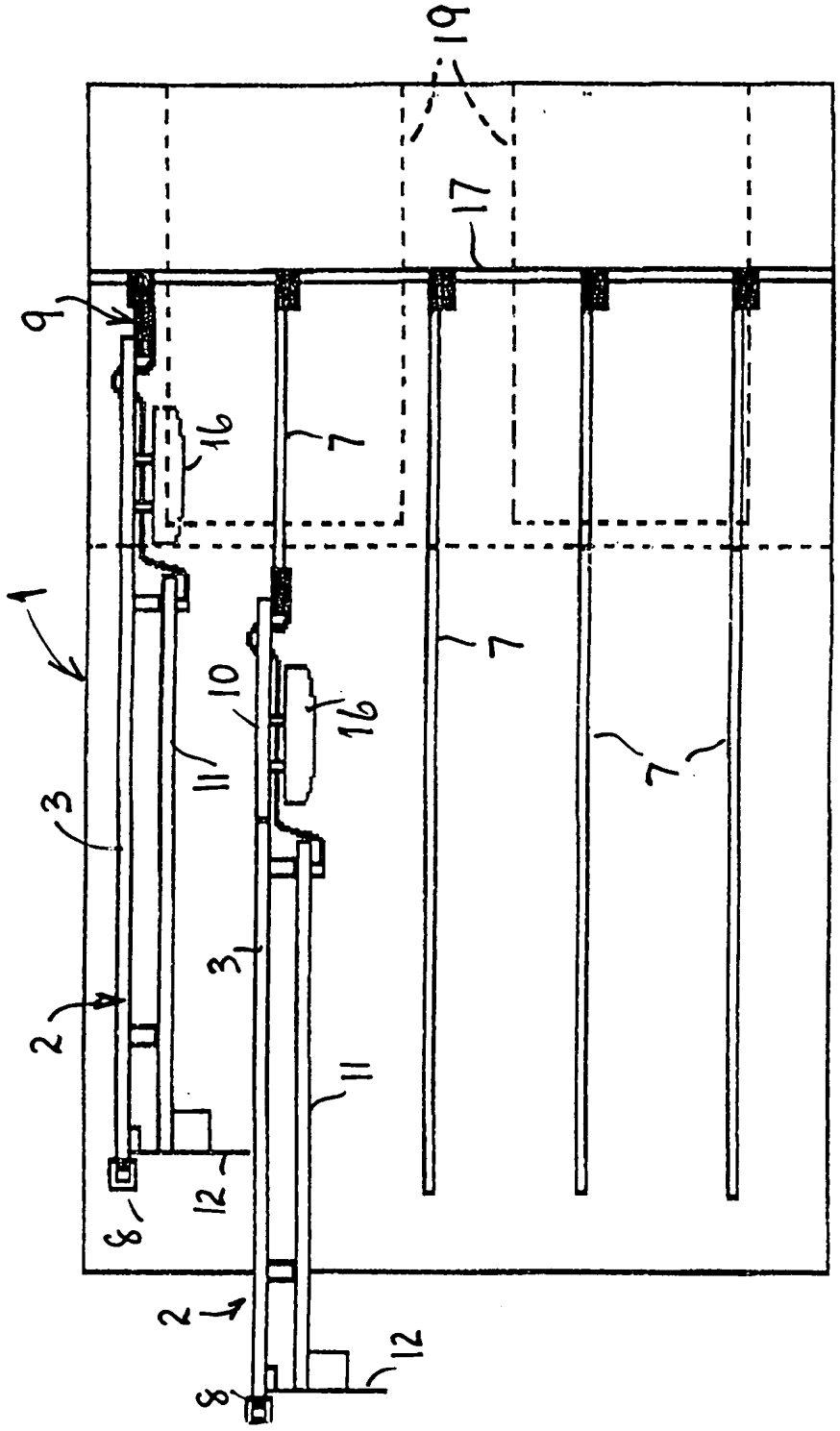

Fig.2

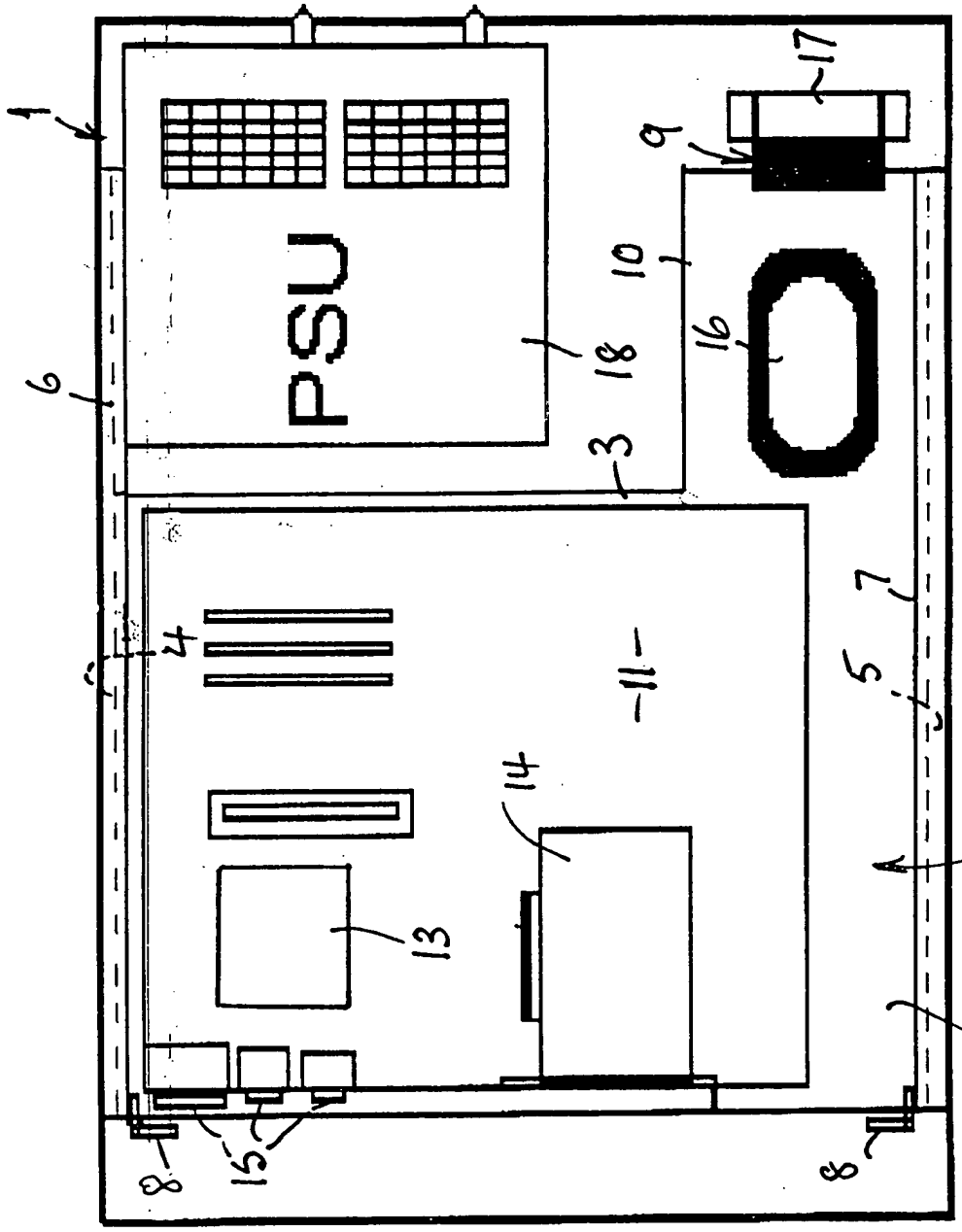

Fig. 3

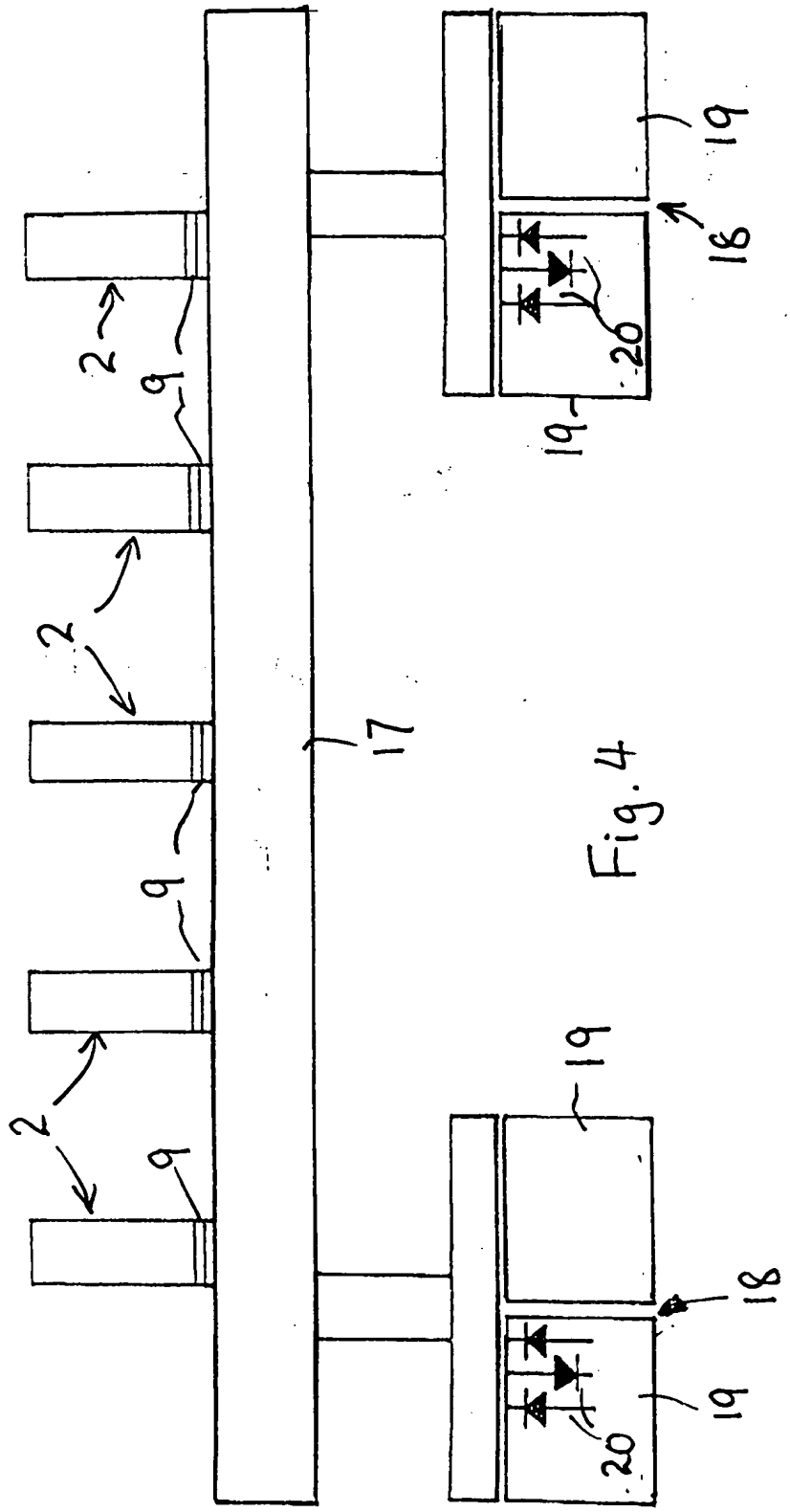

Fig. 4